

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 8TH, 2023 // BOOK OF JAMES

### THE ILLUSION OF WEALTH (JAMES 5:1-6)

**"COME NOW, YOU RICH PEOPLE..."**

Though the Bible does make it clear that wealth can present an additional and significant obstacle (Matthew 19:23-24) to the gospel, neither James nor the Bible claims that money in and of itself is evil.

- **It is when the pursuit of earthly treasures and power is placed over the pursuit of Christ that gives way to all kinds of evil** (1 Timothy 6:10).

### IT'S ALL AN ILLUSION

James has spent most of his letter communicating the necessity of dependence on God.

- Here, James turns his attention to those who have placed their "faith" in their own accomplishments, possessions, and power. **All their energy is in pursuit of these things while ignoring the need of those around them.**

### FOOL'S GOLD

In ancient times, great wealth was typically displayed in three ways: food in excess, expensive clothing, and precious metals.

- James points out the great error in pursuing these earthly things. **None of them are lasting! Food will rot, moths will destroy clothes, and even the most precious metals eventually rust and corrode** (Matthew 6:18-21).

### DIVINE JUDGMENT IS SET

The response is "weeping and wailing" for those who ignore God's demands.

- Those who have stored up earthly wealth through the pursuit of money, power, and status will become overwhelmed at all that will be lost at God's final judgment; **how they will suffer because they were selfish and ignored the needy around them.**

### GOOD STEWARDING OF POSSESSIONS

James is not discouraging people from being successful but is pointing out the sin of those failing to steward their possessions and relieve the suffering of the needy (Ephesians 4:28).

- The early church's solution to hunger and need: **"no one claimed that any of his possessions were his own, but instead they held everything in common"** (Acts 4:32-37).

### THE OUTCRY HAS REACHED THE EARS OF THE LORD

This statement will either be one of warning or comfort depending on if we are the greedy landlord or the mistreated harvester.

- If our lives are full of greed and selfishness, **God will avenge those we have ignored and mistreated for our own gain.** If we are mistreated and suffering, **God hears us when we cry out to Him.**

### PATIENT ENDURANCE (JAMES 5:7-12)

**"THEREFORE, BROTHERS AND SISTERS..."**

James is speaking to fellow believers enduring mistreatment and hardships at the hands of the "selfish landlords" described in the previous section.

- **He encourages us to patiently endure affliction, without relenting on our commitment to God, until the Lord returns.**

### JAMES USES A FARMER AS AN EXAMPLE

A farmer puts in the work necessary to prepare the soil and plant seeds. Then he must be patient and trust God to supply the rain and sun needed for growth.

- He doesn't get frustrated when the harvest doesn't happen immediately because he trusts the process. **We must be patient and trust that God is in control.**

### PATIENCE DOESN'T MEAN LAZINESS

The farmer continues to work in his patience. While waiting for the harvest, he must continue to weed the field to promote growth.

- The farmer has no control over the early rains needed for plowing nor the late rains, which are essential for growth before harvesting, but **he shows great faith and trust by not losing heart in the waiting.**

### THEY KNEW GOD WAS GOOD AND SOVEREIGN

James offered the example of a fictitious farmer, then gives the literal examples of the prophets' and Job's patience in hardships.

- The Prophet Jeremiah endured mistreatment with patience as he was beaten (Jeremiah 20:2) and imprisoned (Jeremiah 32:2). Job lost everything, yet he never cursed God (Job 1:20-22; 2:9-11).

### WHY DO WE RESIST?

"If a man were to attack me with a knife, I would resist him with all my strength and count it a tragedy if he succeeded. Yet if a surgeon comes to me with a knife, I welcome both him and the knife; let him cut me open, even wider than the knife-attacker, **because I know his purpose is good and necessary.**" -David Guzik

### STOP FIGHTING AND BICKERING

Like children who argue and constantly bicker until a parent comes to the door, James exclaims,

**"Look, the judge stands at the door!"**

- In hardships, we should not take it out on our brothers and sisters and be grumblers and complainers. **We are to uphold the law of love** (Leviticus 19:18) **as if the return of Christ is imminent—because it is!**

### BE PEOPLE OF STRONG CHARACTER

James mimics the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 5:34-37) about making oaths. There is nothing wrong with giving someone your word, making promises, or swearing an oath.

- James reiterates that we should not make deceptive, unwise, or flippant oaths. **To swear by anything means there is not enough weight in our character to back our words.**

### TAKE CARE OF ONE ANOTHER (JAMES 5:13-20)

#### PRAY IN TIMES OF GREAT TROUBLE AND JOY

**There is the propensity to forsake God in good and bad times.** In good times, the risk of growing complacent and not seeing the need for God arises. In bad times, we can lose sight of God in all the trouble.

- **We are to come to God in all situations, praying in times of distress and praising in times of joy.**

### "HE SHOULD CALL..."

Anointing with oil has been recognized in Scripture as a symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence and power, as well as having medicinal qualities.

- Notice how James puts the responsibility on the person in need to reach out. Essentially, **if you are in need, stop hesitating and contact leadership.**

### GOD OF MIRACLES

Spiritual and physical healings are available to us from God, but the power does not lie in the oil nor in the person praying. The promise that a **"prayer of faith will save the sick"** does not always produce bodily healing.

- We approach God with a measure of faith, but **trust that the prayer will be answered in a way that fits His will** (1 John 5:14).

### CONFESS TO ONE ANOTHER

James reminds us that confession and prayer bring about healing. To confess means "to say the same thing," so we must identify sin and call it out specifically.

- We must use wisdom in confession, so it does not lead to more sin. **When we confess to one another, we invite intercessory prayer and avoid the isolating effects of sin.**

### THE FERVENT PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

James uses Elijah as an example of fervent righteous prayer.

- The prayer of the righteous is someone who recognizes that their righteousness lies in Christ alone. It is not a prayer to persuade God or to activate God into action, but a **prayer aligned with the will of God and the righteousness he has in Christ.**

### IN CLOSING...

- James concludes his letter in a way that shows his purpose in writing to the Church that was dispersed.
- We must approach those who have wandered from an active faith in Jesus. Not to condemn them, but to set out to save them from eternal separation from God.

### APPLICATION

- Our words matter! Let us not use them to tear down but to build up those around us and to pray to God—who hears us.
- We are to not only be hearers of the Word but doers of the Word.
- **There will be evidence of saving faith displayed through what we say and do.**